

# Mastering Adinkra Symbols: An Establishment of Positive Ghanaian Personality in the Next Generation

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## Abstract

Adinkra symbols, one of the oldest of all art forms, reaching back to prehistoric times, are an important determiner of cultural mutuality among Ghanaians. Adinkra symbols and their meanings have a positive impact on instilling in Ghanaians the pride of identifying themselves as Ghanaians and holding on to it. Well-meaning Ghanaians and important stakeholders in education who are rooted in tradition are keen at being equipped with possibilities of providing a re-orientation of the cultural values among learners if there is the need to present what was good in ancient eyes and move forward undeterred to make a better tomorrow. Human beings, as products of the many different cultures which surround us, can never be seen as culture free. Adinkra symbols and their meanings, if embedded in any form of teaching, have the potential of fostering emotional and cultural intelligence in alienated Ghanaians to return to the glorious past so as to re-validate viable values, contextualize and consolidate them for today, avert the mistakes of the past and confront tomorrow with such lasting eternal values that can make the nation active in a world where values are no longer constant.

**Index terms**— adinkra, core competency, cultural mutuality, national identification and global citizenship skills.

Mastering Adinkra Symbols: An Establishment of Positive Ghanaian Personality in the Next Generation Ruby Jecty Overview-Adinkra symbols, one of the oldest of all art forms, reaching back to prehistoric times, are an important determiner of cultural mutuality among Ghanaians. Adinkra symbols and their meanings have a positive impact on instilling in Ghanaians the pride of identifying themselves as Ghanaians and holding on to it. Well-meaning Ghanaians and important stakeholders in education who are rooted in tradition are keen at being equipped with possibilities of providing a re-orientation of the cultural values among learners if there is the need to present what was good in ancient eyes and move forward undeterred to make a better tomorrow. Human beings, as products of the many different cultures which surround us, can never be seen as culture free. Adinkra symbols and their meanings, if embedded in any form of teaching, have the potential of fostering emotional and cultural intelligence in alienated Ghanaians to return to the glorious past so as to re-validate viable values, contextualize and consolidate them for today, avert the mistakes of the past and confront tomorrow with such lasting eternal values that can make the nation active in a world where values are no longer constant. Our values, worldview and experiences are structured by the society and culture that exert influences on our lives each day and endow the Ghanaian learner with insight into Africanism. This essay focuses on the identification of Adinkra symbols inside the JHS 3 classroom and it argues that supporting the enhancement of cultural and national identification and global citizenship skills with the importance of Adinkra symbols in the preparation of final year studentfacilitator-facilitators of junior high schools in Ghana will constitute a good strategy in committing them to respect their environment and protect their culture for positive patriotic attitudes to be realized in the next generation of Ghanaian youth. It looks at the origin and significance of Adinkra symbols in order to maximize the positive result on cultural identification. Also this essay gives an indepth outline of the methodology used with examples of Adinkra symbols, their names, meaning and their significance in the Ghanaian context and it gives reasons for why the learning of Adinkra symbols can be beneficial in the instilling of patriotism in each one of the learners. The facilitators are from the units of Ghanaian Languages and culture

and African Literature of Foso College of Education because the concept is of major interest to the two entities for as it instills the pride of nationalism and patriotism in learners as propounded by Ghanaian languages and culture, it equally helps in the selfidentification, reorientation of the Ghanaian personality and negritudism in learners as African literature seeks to achieve.

Keywords: adinkra, core competency, cultural mutuality, national identification and global citizenship skills.

### 1 Impact of Emblems on Ghanaians.

? To bring all of us together as Ghanaians.

? To show loyalty to our nation.

? To have unity and prosperity.

? To be proud of our traditions.

? To serve our nation with all our strength and might ? To defend the nation from foreign invaders ? To uphold our cultural heritage ? To know the symbols of authority in Ghana/ I. Adinkra Colours and their Meanings sante traditional symbols which is associated with ideologies, values and significant to other cultures need to be learnt, cherished, valued so that it could be transferred to the next generation and those yet unborn. It is these ideas and values helps to identify us as a group so it needs to be maintained and if possible modified to suit the modern society and the younger generation.

### 2 a) Symbolism of Colours

Colour symbolism can vary dramatically between cultures. Most colours have more positive associations with them than negative. Although some colours do have negative connotations (such as Black for a funeral or for evil) these negative elements are usually triggered by specific circumstances. People's age also has an effect on how colours are perceived. For example, children tend to like bright, happy colours. These are some of the meanings that each colour can represent. Through discussion, it was established that i. Silver/Grey Silver/Grey symbolizes security, reliability, intelligence, staid, modesty, maturity, conservative, old age, sadness, shame and boring.

### 3 ii. White

White is a sacred and pure colour. It's colour of angles and gods, as the colour reflects that which is sacred and pure. It is also the colour doctors, nurses, and others in the health profession, as well as cleanliness. In fact, the Japanese refer to nurses as "Angels in White". White can also represent reverence, purity, simplicity, peach, humility, youth, winter, and snow, good, cold, clinical, and sterile.

### 4 iii. Yellow

Yellow can symbolize joy, happiness, optimism, idealism, gold, honesty.

Learners were then made to represent any of the colours learnt in a drawing to portray its meaning. Before the session ended, learners were asked to find out in addition one occasion which requires the use of the colours to be treated the next day.

### 5 b) Meanings of Adinkra Colours 2 i. Black

Black is the colour of the night, and of "evil" can also be a colour of elegance or class (such as a blacktie, and black evening gowns).

Black can also represent a lack of colour, the primordial void, emptiness. It also represent ideas such as sexuality, mystery, wealth, fear, evil, sadness, remorse, anger, and depth. It can also mean sorrow or mourning, Black, is the colour of mystery and solemnity, the colour of the night. Black expresses the depths of the unknown, and encourages the imagination of a different world from that of daylight realities. Used by itself, black can represent bad luck or misfortune.

### 6 ii. Black/White

Black and white stands for mourning and cheerless occasion. For example, traditional garb for a funeral is black and white. Black represents loss and white for passing onto heavens. (this was unanimously accepted by all the other languages)

iii. Blue Blue is the colour of the purity, and is associated with girls who have similar pure qualities. it is the colour of water and the sea, indicating femininity, life, purity, etc. just as water does.

Blue can also symbolize peace, calm, stability, security, loyalty, sky, water, cold, technology and depression.

An unanticipated contribution was given by the Adanse group. They added that indigo blue mirrors the colour of the vast ocean surrounding the lands. This shade of blue is very commonly seen in art and clothing.

### 7 iv. Brown

Brown represents the ideas of earth, hearth, home, the outdoors, comfort, endurance, simplicity, and comfort.

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## 8 v. Gold

Gold is also associated with royalty. It represents the colour of the heavens, and is used to decorate status.

## 9 vi. Green

Green can represent nature, the environment, good luck, youth, vigor, jealousy, and misfortune. green is regarded as the colour of eternal life, as seen in evergreens which never change their colour from season. In the trees and vegetation are implied.

## 10 vii. Orange

Orange can represent energy, balance, warmth, enthusiasm, flamboyant, and demanding of attention.

## 11 viii. Purple

Purple can represent royalty, spirituality, nobility, mysterious, wisdom, enlightenment, cruelty, arrogance, and mourning.

## 12 ix. Pink

The colour pink usually serves two purposes.

It can be used to show childish innocence, or a characters child-like personality.

It can also be used to show a more flirtatious personality.

Pink is normally a colour associated with girls and femininity.

Pink is considered a colour of good and life, it also symbolizes pure love and we speak of people being "in the pink" or the "freshness" of a newborn baby. Lastly, pink is associated with sexuality, and purity. Pink symbolizes pure love, it is also used for sexual advertisement to indicate the purity of the girls.

## 13 x. Red

Red can symbolize many things; from blood, to love, infatuation.

Strong emotions, or things of strong emotions rather than intellectual ideas. For example, red can symbolize excitement, energy, speed, strength, danger, passion, and aggression.

The colour of blood and fire, represents life and vitality.

Red also signifies the colour of the sun: symbol energy, radiating its vitiating life-force into human beings.

Red is also looked upon as a sensual colour, and can be associated with man's most profound urges and impulses. Ironically, red cats symbolize bad luck. This day's lesson was interesting. Learners seemed well informed about the discussions and gave details and examples that were new to the facilitators. Learners were told they will demonstrate occasions and instances which require the use of these colours. Learners were put into denominational groupings and balloted for the colours so that they could bring samples to class the next day. The facilitators, having her colleague student-facilitator-facilitators agree to participate in the activity, paired them to ballot for one group and prepare them for the demonstration the next day. They were so very happy and the lesson ended for the day. spiritual purity. It is associated with the sacred, and it is considered the colour of gods and kings; the symbol of the purity and sacredness of persons and their estate. "Fufuo" also expresses joy and hope and well-being. That aspect of the human person which bears a man's destiny and directs his fortunes (KRA) is associated with "Fufuo", Hegan ??1961).

"Tuntum" stands for darkness and loss, and for death, but it does not necessarily connote defilement or profanation. The Stool of kings or elders who die in battle or of old age while in office are consecrated and held sacred to their memory, and they are black. While stools, the unconsecrated stools of the Ashanti, are by contrast profane. ??ntobam (1963) suggested that black symbolizes spirituality and age. "All objects which are dedicated to the spirits of the dead are purposely treated to appear and back". Antobam (1963); objects or war booty, except gold and silver, are blackened. But In spite of its association with spirituality and age "Tuntum" is never used for the celebration of victory; it usually expresses sorrow and it is associated with illluck.

"Kobene" is full of ambiguities. Akans generally point to blood as the paradigm of this colour cluster and much of the ambiguity in the symbolic meaning of the colour derives from the mixed associations of blood. Blood stands for life and vitality, and the word "bogya: (blood) means the fire (gya) of creation (bo). Akans believes that blood is the means by which a "Kra" (soul) might be spilled wastefully, stand for death.

Akans consider menstrual blood to be dangerous. It is believed that when menstrual blood comes into contact with a sacred object it desecrated or blunts the sacred object (okum ano) in terms of the purposes the sacred object serves. In such contexts then, red might stand for impurity and danger. When a man puts on a red cloth and smears himself with red ochre, it means he is in a defiant mood (ogyina kodom ano). Among the Ashantis, as Rattray (1927) observed, and it is generally true for most Akans, "sorrow and singer (and danger) (mine) would seem to be related", 'm' ni abere" (my eyes are red) being the idiom common for both expression" of course "m'ani" refers to the blood-short eye.

Time for questioning was an exhaustive one. Learners were so much exhausted in the lesson that it ended up with discussions on our cultural identity. It was seen that no other race in the world draws so much inspiration

155 from colours as do Ghanaians. This is a cultural heritage that we should always hold up to to reidentify our  
156 cultural recognition and make up.

### 157 14 d) Black and White for a Funeral.

158 This group enacted a festival scene where executioners dressed in red looked frightful and aggressive. With the  
159 chief executioner's imaginary sword flying left and right in the air, the scene was filled with "y'ani abere koo"  
160 symbolizing the spiritual protection of the chief and how ready they were to execute anybody who wrongly crosses  
161 their path. The war songs accompanying the actions carried with it love for the chief, vitality and willingness to  
162 defend the the town from human predators. e) A 50th birthday party. gold.

163 Enacted a marriage scene where the bride was dressed in blue to portray femininity, fertility and good character.  
164 The expressions the bride's father used to describe her daughter who at 28 years was still a virgin, and the  
165 interesting way the bride was stuffed to portray her feminine features was a strong declaration that she was going  
166 to execute all the traditional duties of a virtuous woman.

167 Naming ceremony seeing all participants wearing white attires. The lives of the baby and mother signify  
168 victory over death which looms in during labor. And now that seven days had passed by and the baby is still  
169 alive, absolute victory had been won. The entertaining way of slaughtering a cow, cooking and eating told about  
170 the enjoyments of life if lived gracefully.

### 171 15 f) Adinkra Symbols

Adinkra Symbols <sup>1</sup>



Figure 1: G

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<sup>1</sup>Mastering Adinkra Symbols: An Establishment of Positive Ghanaian Personality in the Next Generation